

## REMARKS

Claims 1-4 and 6-11 are pending in the application.

Claims 1-4 and 6-11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,216,675 to Bennett ("Bennett") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,445,130 to Brummer et al. ("Brummer") and U.S. Patent No. 5,251,603 to Watanabe et al. ("Watanabe"). This rejection is respectfully traversed as follows.

It is believed that the combination of Bennett, Brummer and Watanabe do not teach or suggest all of the elements of independent claim 1. For example, Applicant respectfully disagrees with the characterization of Watanabe at pages 4 and 7 of the Office Action as disclosing an elongated body housed in a through cavity defined by said pipe and having at least a tapered end longitudinally spaced from said couplings. While Watanabe may disclose an elongated body having a taper, *the taper is not on a body housed in a through cavity*, as recited in independent claim 1. Rather, the element labeled a taper at page 7 of the Office Action is on *outer tube 18A*, which is not a body housed in a through cavity. For at least the above-stated reason, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 and the claims that depend therefrom are patentable over Bennett in view of Brummer and Watanabe.

Moreover, Applicant respectfully submits that the amendment to claim 1 in the January 16, 2009 Response to Office Action is in line with one of the Examiner's suggestions at page 8 of the outstanding Office Action because the amendment relates to the conical structure of the present invention.

**Conclusion**

Based on the foregoing, the withdrawal of the Election Requirement and a timely examination of all pending claims are respectfully requested. If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this and concurrent replies to charge payment (or credit any overpayment) of any additional required fees to Deposit Account No. 50-2298.

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Respectfully submitted,

/Eric L. Lane/

Eric L. Lane

Reg. No. 56,399

Attorney for Applicant

LUCE, FORWARD, HAMILTON & SCRIPPS, LLP

11988 El Camino Real, Suite 200

San Diego, California 92130

Tel: (858) 720-6300

Fax: (858) 720-6306

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